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The Lost Lenore

A One Act Play

by

Beverley Randolph Tucker



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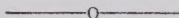
PERSONNEL

(In order of their appearance)

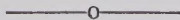
DR. DU VAL—A young French physician who knows something of mesmerism.

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

LENORE—The sweetheart of Poe.



Time—A July night, 1835; *Place*—Richmond, Virginia.



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By

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SCENE

A library.

(The room is dark except for a lamp turned low. Rumbling of thunder heard and lightning seen outside. Poe sits in a tall back arm chair, only his feet show.) Enter Dr. du Val.

DU VAL Ah! Monsieur Poe? Has he been intoxicated? He ez not een? Zat ez too bad, et ez veery bad. *(Turns up the lamp)*. I vill await hees return to tell heem zat I, le docteur du Val, ze pupeel of ze illustrious Marquis de Puysegur, ze pupeel of ze illustrious Franz Anton Mesmer, he comes, hees friend, to tell heem zat Mademoiselle Lenore, hees sweetheart, who zey say ez dead, awaits to tell heem of her love.

POE Did I hear someone say that Lenore is dead? Forever lost? Do I dream or am I in a delirium? Nothing seems real to me.

DU VAL Ah! Monsieur Poe, in ze threatening weather, I come, your friend who have done you ze good deed. Mademoiselle Lenore, she ez dead—no—but she vill be dead soon, ah soon, so veery soon.

POE What are you saying? In this miserable hour, when conflicting emotions first chill, then scorch my blood, and the pall of all ages seems settling upon my soul, do you come to jest with me?

DU VAL Ah, no, Monsieur Poe—pardon—I do not jest. I, le docteur du Val, physician, one time pupeel of ze illustrious Franz Anton Mesmer, I was called in consultation on ze case of ze beautiful Mademoiselle Lenore who was afflicted wiz ze maladie incurable. I, le docteur Jean Paul Pierre du Val, know of your love—infatuation—for ze beautiful ladie, and I know also you had been away. So Monsieur, I, to myself say—she can only a short time live zes life and poor Monsieur Poe may not see her in ze flesh again, but if her animation can be suspended she may live—

POE Yes, go on, for God's sake, go on. I would give my life once more to see Lenore in life.

DU VAL She may live unteel you may see her. Zen ze teachings of Franz Anton Mesmer vill prove themselves true!

POE Tell me all you know, good doctor.

DU VAL While ze other docteur believed zat I was looking to see if her eye react to ze light, I looked deep through ze pupeel of her eye, and while I looked, I her forehead stroked' and say "Mademoiselle Lenore, Mademoiselle Lenore, you sleep—you veery quiet sleep—you breathe, you veery quiet breathe—slow and low—you sleep veery quiet, you breathe veery quiet until your lovere, Monsieur Poe, he come, zen ze spirit vill animate ze flesh again,

but till he come you sleep, veery deep. Now
—now, you are asleep.”

POE Said she any word?

DU VAL Yez, she say “I sleep unteel he come,”
and zen she sleep so quiet ze pulz, eet almoz
stop, ze respiration, eet die down to almoz
nozzing and her eye she close. Ze familie
docteur came to ze bed and to me he say,
“She ez dead. Eet was sudden, was eet not?”
“Yez”, I say.

POE Then, even in death, her spirit is held in
her body and she lives in a state of suspended
animation. I shall see her and communicate
with her. I thank you my friend. What
more?

DU VAL She can not live but a short time—she vil
zis life pass out before I sail for Paris at ze
break of ze day.

POE Left she no request before she lost her
consciousness?

DU VAL She asked to be buried at ze rising of ze
sun, on ze hill by ze revere, where ze light
would shine on her face and ze water be at
her feet.

POE Hold! At sunrise, on the hill by the side
of the river, where the sunlight shines full
in her face and the waters roll by at her feet.
Ah! Doctor, good friend, you must tell me
more before you go.

DU VAL On my way here I pazzed ze house of Mademoiselle Lenore and, while ze watchers were asleep in ze room adjoining, 'I saw through ze open window ze beautiful ladie layed out on ze bier, all dressed in white, wiz a lillie in her hand, across her breast, and as I look ze lillie move, up and down a leetle, jez as if she took a low breath.

POE Thank God, she breathes! Doctor, I have a mission for you, a mission in which a high mystery shall soothe the misery of my soul.

DU VAL But you forget, Monsieur Poe, zat I leave in ze early morning for Paris to study more under ze illustrious Marquis de—

POE You have time to do my mission. The family of this house is away. Use the opportunity which now presents and summon here Lenore, my Lenore.

DU VAL I regret eet ez too late. I have to leave een ze morning.

POE You have sufficient time. You wil see the result of your experiment in mesmerism. Do you summon her?

DU VAL Whèn you ze appeal make to ze scientific side I must obey.

POE Pray proceed, doctor.

DU VAL I shall summon la belle Lenore as I was taught by ze Marquis de—

POE (*Lowers the lamp*). Ah! Lenore, my frail

my beautiful Lenore. I long to touch your golden hair, to feel your warm sweet breath upon my cheek, to hear the music of your melodious voice. (*Walks up and down. Muttering of thunder heard*).

DU VAL Arise, Mademoiselle, arise, throw around you ze robe and come, come to your lovere! Ah! you now through ze low window come.

POE Oh God, let me but sip once more the honey from the chalice of this pure flower! Then I can wait until, at some uncalendared hour, upon some uncharted isle, in some undiscovered sea, our spirits shall commune once more. (*Sits at table*).

DU VAL You are in ze park, Mademoiselle Lenore. Nozzing vill hurt you. Come. (*Goes to window*). Come.

POE The curse of me is that I cannot dwell upon the earth, but in hell with the demons or in heaven among the angels. (*Then the lights grow more dim*). But tonight I shall be in high estate.

DU VAL Ah! You come. Enter ze gate and ze door, Mademoiselle.

POE "Avaunt, tonight my heart is light! No dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a pean of old days!
Let no bell toll! lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,

Should catch the note, as it doth float up
from the damned earth!

To friends above, from fiends below the
indignant ghost is riven,—

From Hell into a high estate far up within
the heaven,—

From grief and groan to a golden throne
beside the King of Heaven."

(du Val goes to the door of the room and opens it. Enter Lenore in a trance state. She is wrapped in a robe. Muttering of thunder heard and distant lightning seen from time to time while Lenore is present).

DU VAL I am successful. I summon ze beautiful
Mademoiselle just as I was taught by ze Mar-
quis de Puysegur, ze pupeel—

POE Enough. She is here. Lenore! *(No an-
swer)*. Good doctor can she, in truth, speak?

DU VAL Zat I do not for certain know.

(du Val turns to remove the robe from Lenore who stands like a statue, and in her hand, across her breast, she holds a lily).

POE No, allow me to remove the robe. How
beautiful she is, and how still.

DU VAL Awake Mademoiselle, ze Marquis de Puy-
segur, ze pupeel of ze illustrious Mesmer com-
mands you, through me, to come back to ze
life. Come back to ze love of your lover.
Awaken! Come back! *(Lenore awakens)*.
I now retire, Monsieur Poe. *(Exit)*.

POE She breathes! She lives! She moves!
Come once more to my arms, Lenore! By
the grace of God this brief grace of life is
given!

LENORE Edgar, My Edgar! Do I hear your voice?
They told me I would never see you again.
Has time elapsed and are you also dead, and
can this place be paradise?

POE My paradise is your presence, but yours
is not yet. You are not dead and have still,
an all too brief lease on life—you were in a
trance of death.

LENORE Ah! death has no dread for me. I remem-
ber a verse you wrote for me of trances:

“And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy gray eye glances,
And where thy footsteps gleams,—
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.”

POE When you are in Paradise I shall write
you other verses, but for the present you are
mine, and then,—you continue the journey on
which you started, along the paths I may never
tread.

LENORE Do I die so soon and leave my Edgar?

POE Yes, you leave me for a time. Come my
love and sit beside me. (*Lays the lily aside
and helps her to the couch*). See, I put my
arms around you and keep the chill air from

you. Soon you pass from earth, but love has distanced death.

LENORE I care not when I die if I die wrapped in your embrace. They told me I must die with you away, but still I prayed it would not be so, and then a strange physician came and bade me look within his eyes. I looked, and there I read a hope, and then I lost my conscious self.

POE He, by some higher power, held your fleeting spirit within your body against the time that I could see you. It was not meant that you should die without me, or that I should live without your spirit hovering over me. When you reach that far distant shore, intercede for me, Lenore, plead that at the time I need you, you may come to me as you have come to me tonight, my love.

LENORE I shall come in spirit to be with you—the same spirit that now quickens my mortal body in this suspended death, shall return to you when you need me most, my love.

POE Love is an eternal thing, no space confines it, no time restricts it and it is all-pervading.

LENORE Yes, and as I die, I only partly leave you, for my love I leave with you, and, as I go, I take with me your love.

POE Then nothing can us separate and all through this dream that we call life and after,



in the spirit land, my soul shall with yours
commune and yours with mine.

LENORE And by what sign is my spirit to know
your times of need, my Edgar?

POE At times my soul arises into the heavenly
ether and I see as angels see and understand
as angels understand. On these occasions I
shall know you and shall be satisfied. At
other times a deep depression settles over me,
enveloping me, pressing down my soul into
utter darkness until it gropes and is lost.
It is then that I need you and it is the silent
cry of that dumb soul, with sightless eyes
strained for you, and deaf ears listening, that
shall arouse the compassion of the guardian
angel and let you come to me.

LENORE Oh! I fear there may be times, when you
are thus depressed, that I can not come to
you, not because I would not wish to, but be-
cause of some divine importunacy.

POE Then shall I wait. Dawn follows the
blackness of the night, land is always on the
further side of the sea, hope is begat of de-
spair and—

LENORE and when last year's blooms are blown,
this year's buds must flower.

POE Yes, life follows death, worlds follow
worlds, suns are evolved from suns. All
things recur in never ending cycles. Again
and again shall our souls meet, not to part

forever, but only to separate for a time in the eternal order of providence.

LENORE And each time our spirits meet I shall plight you my never ending love, my Edgar.

POE This heavenly love will suffice my longing, for my desire is of the soul and not of the flesh. I loved you before space was measured, before matter, before form—in the far yesterday; I love you today, regardless of life, death or circumstance—in the fleeting present; and I shall love you in the sweep, in the expectancy and in the splendor of the never-reached tomorrow.

LENORE Ah! But should our souls be lost from one another, even for a time! I feel faint from the thought of it.

POE It must not come about, and if it should, the direst sorrow known to man would be my unworthy soul groping in the darkness for my lost Lenore. If any strength were in me left I would turn to Heaven and cry,

 "By that God we both adore!

Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within
 the distant Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the
 angels named Lenore,—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the
 angels name Lenore?"

LENORE Hold me, Edgar, hold me close.

POE One last embrace I give you ere your spirit takes its flight. I hold within my arms earth's loveliest form, made lovelier by the radiations of heaven's pure light. Ah! Lenore, I can feel my soul lifting with your soul—lifting—lifting—but I cannot go further, I am losing you, Lenore, my Lenore.

LENORE I feel that I am going, rising, going—my consciousness is going—not into the darkness, my Edgar, but into the light where I shall await you—the soft, white light. (*Dies*).

(The light of the room becomes dimmer and a pale white light comes into the room, like that of the moon which may now be seen through the window, and then a cloud goes over the moon and the light dies down. No more thunder or lightning.)

POE (*Poe lays her on the couch in semi-darkness, places the lily in her hand and kisses her brow, pulling the robe partly over her.*)

“Take this kiss upon the brow!

And in parting from you now,

Thus much let me avow:

You are not wrong who deem

That my days have been a dream.”

(Pulls robe over her face.)

Oh God! She is in Paradise—in Paradise.

(Sits at table. The light goes lower still by the lamp dying out. As he recites the following his voice comes out of darkness. A shadow crosses the room, supposedly Dr. du Val's,

and her body disappears. In truth du Val takes her, silently, out.)

“Thou was’t that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine,—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and
flowers
And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!
Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise
But to be overcast!
A voice from out the future cries
‘On! On!’ But o’er the Past
(Dim gulf!) My spirit hovering
lies

Mute, motionless, aghast.”

(As he finishes the recitation the dawn breaks, and the daylight comes through the window. Poe looks around.)

Where is my Lenore? My lost Lenore!
Was I in a trance? Or was it delirium? Is
Lenore dead? Did I see her in the flesh?
Did I hold her in these arms? Lenore, Le-
nore! Where are you? (*Calls.*) du Val!
Good doctor!—but the doctor has left for
France. I have no way of finding out—of
finding out if—

“All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.”

(*Pause.*)

"Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?"

(*Bells toll. The sun begins to rise and is
seen through the window.*)

True it is that she is dead. The bells now toll. They bury her as she wished—at sunrise, on the hill by the side of the river, where the sunlight shines full in her face and the waters roll by at her feet. Whether I saw her, or whether not, I may never know. But this I feel—when I need her most I shall find her, for she shall leave that place of soft white light and come to the trysting-ground of spirits where the purple edge of the heavens blends with the blue-gray mist of the earth.

(*Resumes his seat in the chair.*)

CURTAIN



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